

Marie-Josée Houle – *Our Lady of Broken Souls* **
(Ottawa Xpress, March 22, 2007)**

With her trusty cache of instruments in tow, Marie-Josée Houle left Edmonton for Ottawa in '03 but with a few modest goals in mind: to find a respectable career, meet a few like-minded musicians and put together a metal band. Never one to wilt under pressure, Houle – her career hopes in limbo and her metal dreams dashed – has, in the years since, become Capital City's consummate roots ringer – an unselfish pro's pro whose sweet and sensuous accordion has melted many a heart and summoned rivers of sweat. A passionate and personal purge of carnal conflicts long past, the alternately bruised and breezy *Our Lady of Broken Souls* – Houle's first solo effort – swings and swoons like a Gypsy-tinged take on *Blood on the Tracks*. *Our Lady of Broken Souls* revels in everything from frisky freylekhs and French valse musette to folk, Paris chansons and shades of Cuban son; it skewers those who "use and abuse" (the bristling *Garden Raider* stands as her *Idiot Wind*) and picks over the "human carnage left behind" with a sense of redemption, compassion and satisfaction. Though emotionally tangled up in blue, the velvet voiced Houle maintains unwavering focus throughout, playing as if every note, every word, every gasp and breath of the squeezebox literally sustains her. (Steve Baylin)